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ABSTRACT

The abattoir (meat processing) industry is facing a number of challenges in Australia, including introduction of technology, safety standards, restructuring, and development and implementation of an effective training culture. The training strategy will effectively target existing training resources for the industry and upskill employees in a range of essential requirements, including occupational health and safety, supervision, quality assurance, meat safety, language and literacy, management, workplace assessment, and training and information technology. The need for vocational education and training (VET) is essentially determined by a complex interaction of factors associated with the VET market. The VET market consists predominantly of various individuals, organizations, and providers of VET programs and services who require learning outcomes associated with VET. Among the critical stages of training strategy implementation are these: form a steering group; establish links and coordinate with the New South Wales (NSW) Premier's Department and the NSW Meat Processing Industry Restructuring Program; prioritize training needs; develop guidelines and procedures for strategy and procedures implementation; circulate instructional materials to targeted workers and evaluate. A variety of training needs and requirements for the meat processing industry have been identified through a research process. Case management is indicated for targeted industry employees through structural adjustment assistance. This assistance will facilitate a number of pathways for individual target group employees. (YLB)

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Development of an industry training strategy for the abattoir industry in New South Wales

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This paper presents a model for the development of an industry training strategy. The model has essentially two parts: quantitative analysis of industry characteristics and qualitative analysis of information obtained through consultative processes, surveys and industry intelligence. The model also attempts to take into account the impact of equity considerations and supply-side and demand-side limitations on the training market.

The paper then outlines how this strategy might be implemented at a statewide level.

The model allows resource allocation to satisfy both economic and social justice outcomes. It also shows how a planning model can be used to form partnerships with diverse groups within industry and the community to achieve state and national objectives for vocational education and training (VET).

The NSW Meat Processing Industry

Consistent with the Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (MINTRAC), the meat processing industry covers abattoirs and boning rooms, smallgoods manufacturers and retail butchers and supermarkets. It is the largest sector of the food manufacturing industry and employs approximately 45 000 people nationally.

Animals processed in the industry include mainly cattle, sheep and pigs. Deer, goats, kangaroo, emu and other game are also processed for both Australian and international markets.

For the purposes of this Training Strategy and to be consistent with the relevant Cabinet Minute associated with the New South Wales (NSW) Meat Processing Industry Restructuring Program, the abattoir sector covering cattle, sheep and pigs was targeted.

Background

A Cabinet Minute proposing the establishment of a NSW Meat Industry Restructuring Program was prepared by the Hon Harry Woods, MP, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Rural Affairs and Minister for Land and Water Conservation. The proposed Program covers a range of elements that include

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accreditation of employee competencies, occupational healthy and safety (OH & S) education, training and research and development.

On 20 November 2000, The Hon Bob Carr MP, Premier of NSW, announced a $12 million NSW Meat Processing Industry Restructuring Program to operate over a three-year period.

The NSW Meat Industry Restructuring Program is a NSW Government initiative which aims to assist meat processing companies, their employees and local/regional economies to manage the significant impact of the expected continued rationalisation of NSW abattoirs.

The NSW Department of Education and Training has expertise in assisting industries to restructure through the provision of training and related services. This expertise includes management of training under the Forest Industry Structural Adjustment Package (FISAP) and the provision of training and related services to the NSW coal mining industry under the NEXT STEP Program.

The Department has also separately identified training initiatives for the meat processing industry generally (hereafter referred to as the Training Strategy) that would be complementary to the NSW Meat Processing Industry Restructuring Program.

A research phase was seen as fundamental to establishing the scope of the Training Strategy and the key principles underpinning the strategy as well as identifying key stakeholders in the meat processing industry.

Rationale

The aim of the Training Strategy is to effectively target the needs of the industry and workers and ensure outcomes both in terms of industry productivity and established pathways for workers both within the industry as well as for opportunities in other sectors.

The industry is facing a number of challenges including the introduction of technology, safety standards, restructuring and the development and implementation of an effective training culture. The Training Strategy will effectively target existing training resources for the industry and upskill employees in a range of essential requirements including OH & S, supervision, quality assurance, meat safety, language and literacy, management, workplace assessment and training and information technology.

References and sources

A variety of principal information sources were used including those from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Agriculture Fisheries Forestry Australia, Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation and the NSW Meat Industry Authority.

Consultation occurred with human resource personnel in abattoirs, workers and ex-workers in the industry and peak employer, employee and training bodies. These consultations used both survey and interview methods.

The diagram at the end of this paper shows how the model draws together planning information and translates this into training activity. It summarises the information inputs and shows their interrelationships and use in developing the training strategy.

The model presented above satisfies both the requirements of methodological robustness and integrity, and local ownership and responsiveness. Feedback at both the macro and micro level has been generally positive.

Factors determining training needs

The need for VET is essentially determined by a complex interaction of factors associated with the VET market. The VET market consists predominantly of various individuals, organisations and providers of VET programs and services who require learning outcomes associated with VET.

While the identification of factors determining training needs differ between regions, both existing evidence and experience suggest that a variety of these factors can be generally identified as determinants of training needs. An improved understanding of these factors at a regional level will serve to maximise the balance of both the delivery of equitable and cost-effective VET.

These determinants can be related to particular segments in the VET market and may be interactive but not necessarily exclusive or limited to:

VET market segment	**Possible determinants of training need**
Individuals	Personal development/career aspirations
	Unemployment/social status
	Financial status
	Geographic isolation
	Changing culture and social fashion
	Government policy
Organisations	Regional development initiatives
	Employment initiatives
	OH&S requirements
	Business profitability
	Economic/export competitiveness
	Business succession planning
	Technological change
	Industrial relations
	Workplace/organisational change
	Incentives and sponsorship
	Government policy
Providers	Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics
	Available resources (capital, curricula, human)

Timing of service delivery
Duplication of activity/services
Demand/unmet demand
Cross-sectoral arrangements
Special needs groups/target groups

Implementation of strategy

The critical stages of training strategy implementation are outlined below:

- Form Meat Processing Training Strategy Steering Group;
- Establish links and coordination processes with NSW Premier's Department in association with the NSW Meat Processing Industry Restructuring Program, especially in relation to case management processes;
- Agree and prioritise the identified training needs and available resources in conjunction with the identified Departmental assistance;
- Investigate the actions arising from matched Departmental services and industry training needs;
- Investigate any implications from the implementation of the *Queensland Meat Processing Industry Training Needs Analysis Report;*
- Develop guidelines and procedures for strategy and service implementation;
- Develop communication strategy and produce information materials;
- Hold information sessions/training for personnel involved in implementation and operation of strategy;
- Circulate information materials to relevant contacts and targeted meat workers;
- Conduct and administer assistance services; and
- Evaluate training strategy and services provided and administered.

Results of the research

A variety of training needs and requirements for the NSW meat processing industry have been identified through the research process. These needs can be summarised as:

- Increased provision and awareness of existing training pathways to the industry (eg prevocational training and apprenticeship and traineeship training);

- The development and encouragement of new training pathways and career paths within the industry, particularly for younger persons (eg options associated with VET in Schools where appropriate);

- The development and promotion of new qualifications and resource material associated with new training pathways for the industry, including professional development for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs);

- Greater involvement of industry with issues associated with the regulation of providers and the delivery of training and assessment by RTOs;

- Consideration of opportunities associated with training infrastructure both within schools and in existing processing establishments/abattoirs;

- Case management associated with conducting skills audits for workers in abattoirs and other sectors of the meat processing industry.

Other case management is associated with structural adjustment assistance for targeted industry employees, who:

- have little or no experience in seeking work;

- have little or no externally recognised skills;

- may need their recognised skills updated;

- will need to acquire new skills for future employment, and

- will need assistance to participate in training.

This assistance will facilitate a number of pathways for individual target group employees through case management (which may not be mutually exclusive). These are:

- Pathways involving retraining options and skills recognition, in association with continuing and/or new employment opportunities within the meat processing industry;

- Pathways to self-employment or contract labour (including contract opportunities within the meat processing industry);

- Pathways to retirement from work; and

- Pathways to employment opportunities within other industries.

In this context of identified needs there are a number of specific services that the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) will provide through programs largely administered by eleven Industry Training Services Centres (ITSCs) located throughout NSW. These services would be complementary to the NSW Meat

Processing Industry Restructuring Program endorsed by the Cabinet Office and Treasury.

Conclusion

It is evident that the NSW Meat Processing Industry has and is likely to experience structural change. Rationalisation within the industry will most likely lead to a net reduction in the number of abattoirs and employees required.

The potential reduction of employees within the industry and their propensity to relocate for reemployment is difficult to quantify.

The NSW DET has identified a number of services that can be applied to provide assistance to the industry. A large proportion of this assistance can also be coordinated with other State Government initiatives, in particular the NSW Meat Processing Industry Restructuring Program.

Whilst some of the services provided by the Department are aimed at improving and positioning the industry to be more productive, a large proportion will be focused in terms of individual employee case management.

The coordination of all services, including those available through the NSW Meat Processing Industry Restructuring Program, possibly by case managers, will be critical in the provision of the full suite of available services to industry.

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Industry training model - how supply and demand fits together